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ABSTRACT

Despite government initiatives to foster lifelong learning, Chinese Taipei has yet to develop a truly comprehensive system of adult education. Despite high illiteracy rates, only 5% of all adults are currently enrolled in supplemental education, due in part to traditional ideas of formal education, and lack of governmental support. In 1994, however, President Lee delivered a speech advocating lifelong learning, and governmental initiatives ensued. The Ministry of Education (MOE) initiated a "5-Year Plan to Develop and Improve Adult Education," which will produce more independent, nonprofit educational organizations. In order to cultivate lifelong learning, there needs to be greater private sector involvement within Chinese Taipei. Colleges and universities must also make greater societal contributions to adult learning. The MOE is attempting to remove some of their traditional restrictions, such as the current exam system. A balance must be achieved between formal and non-formal educational opportunities, and diverse programming must be available to satisfy the wide range of societal and individual needs. Chinese Taipei is attempting to make use of multimedia resources, and encourage private philanthropic organizations to participate in lifelong learning programs. A single, focused, comprehensive strategy must be implemented in order for Chinese Taipei to remain economically competitive. Contains 12 references. (YKH)

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From Supplemental Education to Lifelong Learning in Chinese Taipei

by Chuan Lee

Although lifelong learning has become accepted in other economies, it remains a relatively new and as yet unestablished concept in Chinese Taipei. This is in spite of the significant and urgent need to develop an effective, broad and inclusive system of lifelong learning. Currently adult education programming in Chinese Taipei focuses on supplemental education, social education, open colleges and an open university. At present, only 5% of the adult population of Chinese Taipei participate. The Ministry of Education has been implementing policies and structures since 1990, at the direction of the President of Chinese Taipei, to strengthen lifelong learning. Regardless, much remains to be done and it cannot be said that Chinese Taipei is well on the road to creating a lifelong learning society. Obstacles to lifelong learning include limited access to programming, an emphasis on formal, degree granting higher education at the expense of other options, and the lack of a single lifelong learning authority.

INTRODUCTION

During the past twenty years, Chinese Taipei has revolutionized its workforce and become a high-technology, information-based society. The result is that more and more of the working population is dedicated to the communications industries. Within the past fifteen years, revolutionary changes have taken place in computer and electronic technology, resulting in a surging demand for an up-to-date, highly trained workforce. Although the number of training opportunities has increased dramatically during this period, supply does not come close to meeting demand.

In a recent work, James Martin (1996, p. 7) observed that "we must grow human potential as fast as we grow technological potential". In this regard, Chinese Taipei has fallen short of the mark. To address this shortcoming, Chinese Taipei needs to rapidly develop and deploy a national action plan for lifelong learning. To properly examine the current context in Chinese Taipei, and to identify areas specifically in need of development, a portrait of lifelong learning is appropriate.

Lifelong learning includes both formal and non-formal education, and it integrates all educational levels and structures, regardless of time, space, content or learning styles (Davis, Wood, & Smith, 1986). Lifelong learning incorporates a variety of learning methods and strategies, ranging from self-guided study through to formal education. Developed and developing economies have in the latter part of this cen-

tury relied on formal education in order to respond to most learning needs. However, in the society of the future, all members of society will require not only formal schooling but also a plan for and access to lifelong learning. Societies will become learning communities, providing a host of continuous opportunities throughout the lifespan.

This new approach to learning and education reflects a fresh commitment towards the development of human resource potential. Investment in this potential through lifelong learning requires that strategic choices be made at the national, regional and community levels in order to establish relevant and efficient systems for lifelong learning. Key, practical elements in the development of a lifelong learning system include:

- completion of a needs analysis for individuals, groups and the society at large;
- clarification of structural roles and relationships, particularly between the formal and informal systems;
- identification of all the stakeholders and their respective roles (such as government, educational institutions, the private sector, volunteer organizations, and individuals);
- creation of collaborative networks and partnerships amongst the stakeholders;
- provision of information on lifelong learning throughout the society and at every level, coupled with incentives to participate;
- institutionalization of a common vision of lifelong learning and commitment to this vision as evidenced by the establishment of a single, appropriately resourced coordinating body.

Against the background of this framework of elements, there is work to be done within Chinese Taipei.

CURRENT STATUS OF LIFELONG LEARNING IN CHINESE TAIPEI

The concept of lifelong learning was discussed within the international community as early as the 1970s, and has been ardently promoted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (see Faure, et al., 1972). Lifelong learning in Chinese Taipei, however, remains a relatively new and as yet unfocused topic. Even at this stage the Ministry of Education (MOE) has yet to assign a specific division to integrate and coordinate lifelong learning resources in Chinese Taipei. Currently, the Social Education Division of the MOE is responsible for adult education in Chinese Taipei, and the adult education system as a whole is regulated by various divisions within the MOE.

"Supplemental Education", the label used for formal adult education in Chinese Taipei, includes adult programming in the elementary, junior and senior high schools, and in the junior colleges. In 1995, supplemental education accounted for 27,334 students studying in 342 schools at the elementary school level, 24,610 stu-

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dents studying in 224 schools at the middle school level, 7,532 students studying in 8 schools at the senior high school level, 211,325 students studying at the vocational high school level, and 33,762 students studying in the 8 junior colleges which offer college-level supplemental education to the general public (Executive Yuan, 1995). Given the population of Chinese Taipei, it is clear that this type of education is not widely and commonly accessed by adult learners, nor is it a primary focus of the major educational providers.

Also a component part of the existing lifelong learning structure in Chinese Taipei is the non-formal adult education system, identified by the MOE as "Social Education". Organizations providing social education include cultural, artistic and scientific organizations. As a result, libraries, museums, theatres, memorial halls, and sports facilities are governed by the social education regulations and provide a variety of lifelong learning opportunities to the general public. In 1995, there were 13 national, 58 provincial, and 353 county and local government social education organizations.

In addition to these organizations and programs, Chinese Taipei offers adult education through distance learning. This is organized through a well-designed Open University and four Open Junior Colleges. As of 1994, there were more than 140,000 and 200,000 graduates from the Open University and Open Junior Colleges, respectively. With the notable exception of the Open University, there has been no formal administrative bureau or independent fund to coordinate and promote adult education (Hwang, 1995).

Regardless of the type or venue for supplemental education offered within Chinese Taipei, the effect has been to provide a second chance for those who did not or were not able to take advantage of educational opportunities during their youth. In effect, supplemental and, to a lesser extent, adult education provides a second chance. For most citizens, the opportunity to build on their education is the only means for improving their standard of living.

Given the number of persons in Chinese Taipei who fall in the illiterate or poorly educated categories, it is astonishing that there has been so little demand for supplemental education. Two reasons may explain this. First, it is a commonly accepted notion in Chinese Taipei that a one-time educational experience during youth should be sufficient for the rest of one's life. Second, for many years no government ministry successfully promoted supplemental education. Currently, Chinese Taipei enrols approximately 5,300,000 students, of which 94% are in the formal education system and only 6% are learning through the Supplemental Schools or the Open University system (Ministry of Education, 1995). Only 5% of all adults are enroled in any form of adult education.

If Chinese Taipei expects to address the long-term educational needs of its population, particularly in the highly competitive communications industries, then both the educational structures and the attitudes of the people must be recast. A fully integrated lifelong learning system will be a necessity for Chinese Taipei in the 21st century.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION AND LIFELONG EDUCATION

As described earlier in this paper, the potential pool of lifelong learners in Chinese

Taipei is enormous. According to a MOE survey of people over the age of 60, there are more than 1.3 million illiterate and nearly 5.3 million adults with education at or below the elementary school level (Ministry of Education, 1992). In addition, nearly 8.3 million persons, or 57% of the total adult population, never study or even bother to read magazines (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1992). These data are astonishing, indicating as they do that more than half of the total adult population of Chinese Taipei is either incapable of or not interested in acquiring new information. Given the population base and the current status of lifelong learning, the task of addressing learning throughout the lifespan in Chinese Taipei is indeed daunting.

This problem is compounded by the fact that Chinese Taipei has tied its economic fortunes to the production of information technology. Clearly, the 21st century will bring higher levels of competition, and the need for a well trained workforce who will take it upon themselves to continually update their knowledge and skills. Even those professionals who hold degrees or diplomas cannot afford to be complacent. The fact is that one-time education is no longer sufficient for a lifetime of work. Continuous learning will become synonymous with continuous improvement.

Further to this issue, the lack of technical knowledge and expertise, or the simple inability to use this knowledge or apply these skills, is creating a new definition of "illiterate". It can now be applied to professionally trained, technical personnel who fail to maintain currency in their fields. The notion of continuous learning is necessary not only for the survival of the individual, but also for the survival of businesses and corporations. In fact, it could be argued that the very survival of the Chinese Taipei economy is at stake. It is also important to recognize that the education being described here goes beyond simple acquisition of new vocabulary and general working skills. A highly technical and information-based society needs a level of sophistication that far exceeds what was acceptable only a few years ago.

At present, the adult education system in Chinese Taipei, as is the case in many other economies, has emphasized and become dependent on the formal school system to fulfil the educational and training needs of its adult population. This reflects the prevailing belief of the people in Chinese Taipei that a school-based education, and the resulting diploma or degree, is the only appropriate path to securing a good job and promotions. Although alternate channels for achieving professional certification coupled with a variety of learning venues are available, broad acceptance of these "alternate" credentials by potential employers is uncommon. As a result, endorsement by the general population continues to be marginal. Achievement is linked to successful graduation from formal schooling and, as a result, the pursuit of a higher degree through traditional channels continues to be over-emphasized. This situation leads to tremendous competition among school goers.

All schools at all levels evaluate prospective students according to entrance exam scores, and admit them accordingly. Students who do not pass the entrance exam are discouraged from seeking out alternative forms of training. Instead, they tend to enrol in "cram schools" in order to re-try the entrance exams for the formal educational system. It is difficult to promote lifelong learning in the context of these attitudes. However, if Chinese Taipei does not develop new systems and new values, the

society will be ill-prepared to face the economic challenges of the 21st century.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

During the 7th National Education Conference in 1994, the MOE specifically stated that lifelong learning will be key to the future development of education in Chinese Taipei. At the same time, President Teng-hui Lee delivered an important speech on education, stating,

> *The ideal of lifelong learning is to ensure the needs of education at every level of growth. In order to construct a learning society: we have to remove the idea of solely seeking a higher degree and try our best to get our people back to school to be re-educated.* (Ministry of Education, 1994)

The same year, during the Teachers' Day banquet, President Lee again emphasized this point and urged the development of a lifelong learning system and perspective. In this speech, President Lee brought the private sector into the equation. He said,

> *Due to the rapid changes in modern society, everyone needs to be re-educated and re-trained all the time. Our society should be able to provide a variety of opportunities for learning and training. In addition to the formal education, schools should also strengthen both adult education and continuing education. Private organizations should also play a key role in the area of social education and offer related educational services to the general public so that we can make our society more suitable for lifelong learning and every person has access to educational opportunities.* (Ministry of Education, 1994)

Subsequently, the MOE announced a "White Paper" on Education in Chinese Taipei and stated that the major goal of future development in Chinese Taipei education would be to establish a sound lifelong learning system while developing a learner-friendly society.

Demonstrating its commitment towards a lifelong learning system, the MOE drafted an "Adult Education Law". In order to further promote the formation of a society of lifelong learners, the MOE initiated a "5-Year Plan to Develop and Improve Adult Education". Initial investment during the first year of the five year plan was in the order of NT$240 million. However, it is expected that the total government investment in this effort will top NT$3.5 billion dollars by early in the new millennium.

Traditionally, and as noted earlier in this paper, adult education has been limited to formal, in-school educational programming. However, with support from the government, programming via radio and television broadcasting systems has recently allowed more people to benefit from adult education curricula. At the same time, a variety of new delivery and learning methods are being deployed, including seminar series, conferences, self-study programs, consultant and advisor systems, home study applications, and practical training programs. With the increasing variety of delivery methods, more opportunities in more forms will be available for people to pursue lifelong learning options.

Through the present five-year plan, it is expected that more independent, non-profit, educational organizations will be formed. Some of these, such as the Adult Education Center at the Taiwan Normal University, will be attached to universities. Others, such as the Adult Education Resource Centers located in various cities, will be government directed, either locally or nationally. Still others, such as the Adult Continuing Education Centers in vocational high schools, will be locally directed. Together, these institutions will have a significant effect on the quantity, quality and variety of lifelong learning programs available in Chinese Taipei.

Further expansion of the lifelong learning concept can be seen in the newly developed senior citizens' educational programming, a host of women's learning activities, leisure education training, self-improvement activities, and professional development and skills training workshops. Assuming these initiatives are successful, it is expected that lifelong learning activities will drive a new and fast expanding trend in personal and professional development through a host of channels in Chinese Taipei.

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER ECONOMIES

At this time there remain two key differences in terms of lifelong learning in Chinese Taipei compared with other developing economies. First, in Chinese Taipei, private organizations remain virtually untapped as sources of lifelong learning programming and expertise. One of the requirements associated with an effective system of lifelong learning is the need to make learning more available, broader in nature, and more practical. Joint ventures with private organizations are an effective and efficient method for broadening the scope of learning programs and ensuring a fast and efficient response to market demands. However, to date there have been only a few private organizations within Chinese Taipei that have focused on the provision of lifelong learning programming. In order to cultivate an effective system of lifelong learning, there needs to be greater private sector involvement within Chinese Taipei. The government cannot do it all.

The second key difference relates to the fact that colleges and universities in Chinese Taipei do not contribute in a significant manner to the provision of lifelong learning. By nature, colleges and universities tend to be exclusive rather than inclusive, and nowhere is this more obvious than in Chinese Taipei. In many other economies, colleges and universities have played a role, albeit more often than not a small one, in continuing education programming. This has not only expanded the services and programming functions of the colleges and universities that do this, but it has also had a significant effect on the population by opening the doors of higher education more widely than would otherwise have been the case. Currently, adult education in Chinese Taipei colleges and universities is underdeveloped. Even though the colleges and universities promote the concept of adult education, the actual programming is minimal and often weak, reflecting restrictions of tradition, funding and structure.

Observing other lifelong education systems, we can see that lifelong learning strongly influenced by community-based initiatives and universities is becoming the norm. In Japan, though the formal school system does not support adult education,

there are many learning activities provided by private organizations and supported by both the government and the community at large. Virtually every community has at least one organization dedicated to promoting adult education activities and coordinating with the local libraries, museums, social education facilities and job training centers to form an integrated local learning network. In fact, promotion of lifelong learning by private organizations has become the hallmark of Japanese lifelong education (see Hwang, 1994, p. 366-368).

Private sector organizations in Europe and the United States are also known for playing a more active role in the provision of lifelong learning than is the case in Chinese Taipei. Further, colleges and universities in these jurisdictions commonly promote a host of lifelong learning activities through adult and continuing education programming. This reflects recent trends and sharp changes in the structure and philosophy associated with the traditional university.

The British Open University is thought to be a new style of university, specifically structured to suit the needs of adult learners. Similar off-campus degree programs offered in other European countries and in the United States of America are designed to provide programming without the boundaries associated with time, location, and form. The off-campus degree approach not only promotes transferability, but also acts as a credit transfer mechanism, counting and recognizing credits from other universities as well as crediting previous learning and work experiences. The number of students completing programs through the non-traditional universities is increasing.

Universities have a unique status in most societies. They are seen as repositories of knowledge and culture, centers of research, and are equipped with highly trained personnel who have a particular focus on research. Justifiably, they are respected as the highest rung on the educational ladder. However, faced with the very different needs of the next century, colleges and universities in Chinese Taipei must re-evaluate their functions and responsibilities. These institutions must broaden their contribution to the society in order for more people to benefit from a wider variety of adult educational programs. It must be the responsibility of colleges and universities in Chinese Taipei to provide access to lifelong learners sooner rather than later.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The emphasis on formal education in Chinese Taipei needs to be addressed. Currently, the system is uni-directional, lacks flexibility, and does not come close to meeting the professional and personal needs of a society in transition. A true learning society must achieve a balance between formal and non-formal educational opportunities, and provide the diverse educational programming needed to satisfy the range of societal and individual needs. This is the immediate challenge.

Inspired by the lifelong learning ideal, the MOE is currently launching an educational reform which is designed to overcome the constraints of traditional education in Chinese Taipei. Specifically, the MOE is working toward ameliorating the current exam system, a system marked by its life-determining focus, and at the same time developing a host of new learning paths conspicuous for their variety and flexibility. The goal is to provide learning opportunities at every stage in life. As long as a per-

son wishes to learn, opportunities will be present. In particular, those who need a "second chance" will find it easy to identify and attend a learning program specific to individual interests and needs.

As Chinese Taipei moves towards the implementation of a learning society, colleges and universities face a decision point. Though the MOE continues to encourage these institutions to promote and offer adult education programming, traditional university values continue to pose a significant barrier. On the positive side, continuing education has been adopted by the colleges and universities, and many have established "Schools of Adult Education" along with modified entrance requirements. In some cases these modifications include changing the examination methods, modifying approaches for admission, and taking life experience into account. This has provided citizens in Chinese Taipei with an alternative for acquiring diplomas and degrees. However, it is not enough, and supply does not come close to meeting demand. If the universities are not willing or able to modify their programming to a much greater extent, the MOE may create adult education alternatives that will bypass the colleges and universities (Chang, 1996).

Chinese Taipei's lifelong learning development target is to provide a range of programming for 40% of the adult population by the year 2010. To achieve this, adult education programming offered through colleges and universities must make use of a variety of new media, including cable television, the Internet, CD ROM, and other distance learning modes. Currently there are more than 3.6 million households in Chinese Taipei with cable television, representing more than 50% of the population (Cheng, 1995). For this reason it is the most obvious media to initiate widespread university-based continuing education programming. Though this is just one element of a comprehensive lifelong learning system, it would be a significant start for Chinese Taipei.

In order to encourage private philanthropic organizations to participate in lifelong learning promotion and programming, Chinese Taipei has launched several community projects that focus on the delivery of adult education programming. These efforts have taken the form of encouraging private philanthropic organizations to host community activities. However, though specific initiatives have been successful, there are not enough educational foundations and other similar organizations registered with the MOE in order to have a substantial influence on programming. To date, the solution for this problem is not obvious. Anticipating that private companies will take up the slack with regard to the provision of lifelong learning activities may also be problematic. These organizations tend to focus on specific areas, such as high-level technical training, leaving the large sectors, such as adult basic education, unserviced.

In Chinese Taipei, there are many learning centers within large metropolitan areas which provide a variety of short courses aimed at adults. However, these do not address the needs of the rural population or those who live in smaller centres. To partially address this issue, the MOE is planning to convert six Social Education Centers, located in Taipei, Kaoshiung, Hsin Chu, Chang Hwa, Tainan, and Taitung, into centers specially designed for the promotion and delivery of adult education. The MOE is also implementing a special project, "Establishing a Social Education

Network and Counselling System Project", which will convert libraries into local adult education centres (R.O.C., 1994). This will allow learners island-wide to access educational learning channels directly through their local libraries. These local adult education centres would be resourced by the six regional centres noted above.

CONCLUSION

While Chinese Taipei has at last begun the lifelong learning journey, the road remains long. While the MOE has made progress in so far as providing information on lifelong learning at the community level, and encouraged participation, the results have yet to be significant.

Needs analysis, at the individual, local and national levels, has yet to be completed, and efforts with regard to the development of partnerships and collaborations have been sluggish. Corporate and business involvement in lifelong learning is virtually non-existent, and all these issues may be attributed to the lack of a single, focused, comprehensive strategy. Until such a strategy is convincingly implemented Chinese Taipei may be losing ground to other economies with regard to the development of a lifelong learning society.

Clearly, the nature of work, both now and in the foreseeable future, requires constant retraining, upgrading and ongoing learning. Knowledge has, indeed, become the most valuable asset for individuals and for the society. To establish a lifelong learning society, the people of Chinese Taipei must alter their traditional views of education and learning, and accept that learning throughout the lifespan is a necessity for everyone.

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